

NAGUIB MAHFOUZ'S METAPHORS IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION

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ABSTRACT

Due to linguistic and cultural differences, translating metaphors poses various challenges. Differences in the way languages employ imagery to convey human experience add further complexities. This paper discusses the strategies translators adopt to render metaphors from Arabic into English. To achieve this goal, examples of metaphors in Naguib Mahfouz's *Palace of Desire* are singled out, analyzed, and compared with their counterparts in a published English translation. Discussion illustrates that metaphors in *Palace of Desire* are functional. For example, they illuminate readers about characters, events, and themes. Analysis also reveals that different types of equivalence are employed. Translators use ideational equivalence to give the meaning without imagery. Functional equivalence appears when English has a metaphor that expresses the idea in the ST using a different image. Formal equivalence is sometimes opted for when contextual factors make the message clear. A fourth method is changing the metaphor into a simile. Thus, the image is kept in English and made more accessible. A fifth method is keeping some elements of the metaphor and changing others depending on translators' judgment. In conclusion, translators' efforts to bring about a representative rendering of the author's language and messages are highlighted.

KEYWORDS: Metaphors, Imagery, Translation, Naguib Mahfouz, World Literature, *Palace of Desire*, Arabic Literature

INTRODUCTION

Metaphors are figures of speech encompassing imagery or comparisons expressing vivid ideas or feelings. According to D. A. Cruse (1986), "a metaphor induces the hearer (or reader) to view a thing, a state of affairs, or whatever, as being like something else" (p.41). This comparison usually expresses ideas more effectively than using words in their literal meanings. The effectiveness of metaphors emanates from the strong relationship they establish between readers and text. Imagery in metaphors stimulates readers' imagination as intended meanings are indirectly expressed. Instead of giving direct access to meaning, metaphors provide avenues that readers' minds should take to unveil meanings hidden in texts. Important functions of metaphors are emphasized by Christina Schaffner (2004). In her discussion of the cognitive approach to metaphor, Schaffner (2004) states that "metaphors are not just decorative elements, but rather, basic resources for thought processes in human society" (pp. 1257-1258). Thus, in addition to enhancing the aesthetic value of a text, metaphors can give insights into people's modes of thinking. Similarly, Anatol Stefanowitsch (2007) indicates that "metaphor is fundamental to natural language" (p.143). Furthermore, the role of metaphors in meaning construction is emphasized by Markus Tendhal and Raymond W. Gibbs Jr. (2008) who try to build links between relevance theory and the cognitive approach to this figure of speech. This contribution of metaphor to the value of a text adds to the responsibility of translators whose main task is to adequately convey aspects of the source text (ST) into the target text (TT).

Discerning metaphorical meanings can be difficult. The challenge becomes greater when translating metaphors from one language into another. The difficulty arises from the differences between languages in using metaphors. According to Christina Schaffner (2004), "The phenomenon of metaphor has regularly been of concern to translation

scholars who have argued about problems of transferring metaphors from one language and culture to another" (p. 1254). However, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, few studies have been dedicated to the problems of rendering metaphorical expressions in *Palace of Desire* (1987; trans. 1992). At this point, it could be noteworthy that this novel is among the works that significantly contributed to the author's "artistic and critical fame" (Adel Ata Elyas, 1979, P. 14). Thus, this study is hopefully intended to add to Mahfouz's scholarship and to fill a gap in translation studies on Mahfouz's works. The following section is dedicated to the strategies and problems involved in the translation of metaphors.

METAPHORS IN *PALACE OF DESIRE* AND THEIR TRANSLATION

A significant aspect of Naguib Mahfouz's language in *Palace of Desire* is its rich variety of metaphors. Throughout the novel, characters use different types of imagery to achieve certain goals. For example, rather than using literal language giving advice or complaining about a state of affairs, characters resort to metaphors to convey their messages indirectly; hence their effective modes of expression.

Mahfouz is known for his revelatory "combination of description and dialogue" which he wields "so masterfully" (Adel Ata Elyas, 1979, P. 14). Metaphorical expressions figure in these dialogues. The examples below illustrate translation issues arising from rendering these expressions into English. Each source text (ST) is followed by an English transliteration (ET); then, its English translation (TT) is given so that readers could have better access to the corresponding analysis.

While exchanging conversation with her husband, Amina's impression about the intense summer heat is expressed as follows,

ST1: -الدنيا كلها كوم وحجرة الفرن كوم! (ص 6)

ET1: al-ddunia kulha kouw wa hujratu al-furn kouw! (p.6)

TT1: The whole world's a blazing pyre, especially the oven room. (p. 2)

In addition to referring to the hot weather, Amina alludes to the difficulty of her task as a housewife involved in baking the family's bread at that time. Literally, Amina's remark is "The whole world is a pile, and the oven room is a pile." She draws an image including two separate piles. The first one represents the summer heat of the whole world, while the second one represents the heat of the oven room. The image suggests that the immense heat of the oven room equals or is no less intense than that of the whole world put together. This sort of parallel description does not appear in the TT. Translators give the image of the whole world as a "burning spot," with the oven room having more intense heat. Their choice aptly conveys the message without using the image of the two piles putting the whole world on one side and the oven room on the other side. At this point, they introduce the image of the "pyre" which is not suggested by the ST. "Pyre" can be associated with pagan traditions related to the burial of the dead. Translators' strategy illustrates the problems involved in dealing with metaphors. The complexity of this process is pinpointed by Stefano Arduini (1998) who states that translating metaphors "does not depend on an abstract complex of rules, but rather on the structure and function that a specific metaphor has within a determined text" (p. 196). Here, translation can be seen as a process of interaction between different factors like text, translators, and their background knowledge. Opting for functional equivalence reflects the priority that translators give to meaning and message rather than form. This is an example of the decisions translators need to take for considerations like smooth flow of ideas. Translators sacrifice ST imagery as it can be odd in the eyes of TT readers. Creativity and some degree of liberty can be noticed here.

Another metaphor is used to refer to rainy weather. Khadija and her family are waiting for her father. He is coming as her mother-in-law has complained to him about Khadija's "inconsiderate" manner of dealing with her. Despite the extraordinary weather conditions, the old lady insists that the father come to see with his own eyes his daughter's "bad" deeds. Khadija is definitely nervous about meeting her father. Her sister asks her about how the sky looks like. Alluding to the mercilessness and irrationality of asking a man to settle family conflicts in such severe weather conditions, she replies:

ST2: قطران! ستجعل الحارات بحورا قبل الليل. (ص 238)

ET2: qutran! sataj'alu al-harati buhooran qabla al-llaili, (p238)

TT2: "Overcast! All the alleys will be lakes by nightfall. (p. 231)

Literally, Khadija says, "Tar! It will make the alleys seas before night." She exaggerates rainy weather using images suggesting that the sky is black like tar, and that the place will be immersed in rain water. Unlike English that uses understatements, Arabic has a tendency to use exaggeration or overstatement (Yowell Y. Aziz, 1998, p. 133). This difference can be clearly noticed in the rendering above. For example, "Overcast" suggests thick layers of dark clouds. However, it does not convey the same degree of blackness suggested by Khadija's "قطران" [qutran] (tar) which has associations with gloom, dissatisfaction, sadness, and bad news. In addition, "alleys" becomes the head noun in a nominal phrase premodified by "all" and the article "the." This phrase is the subject. In Arabic, an implied pronoun referring to the sky plays the role of the subject. The word "بحور" [buhoor] (seas) is rendered into "lakes" which are generally not as big as "seas." The phrase "قبل الليل" [qabla al-llaili] (before night) is rendered into "by nightfall" which does not reflect the speed of the rain water immersing the area. Thus, the target text does not convey the strong image of heavy rain and Khadija's annoyance and embarrassment. A rendering conveying the ST image like "It's pitch dark" can be odd.

Other metaphors use different images. The following examples are dedicated to the translation of metaphors using the image of the "tongue." Al-Sayyid Ahmed Abd al-Jawad is not happy with his son's decision to join Teachers College. The narrator describes the upset father as follows:

ST3: حول السيد وجهه عنه, ولسان حاله يقول: "اللهم طولك يا روح", (ص 55)

ET3: hawwala al-ssayyidu wajhahu 'anhu, wa lisanu halihi yaqulu: "allahumma tawwillik ya rouh," (p. 55)

TT3: Al-Sayyid Ahmed turned his face away, clearly implying: "O God, have mercy." (p. 55)

A literal rendering can go as "Al-Sayyid turned his face away from him (his son) with the tongue of his condition saying: "O God, elongate my soul." English sacrifices the two images. The first one is "لسان حاله" [lisanu halihi] (Lit. the tongue of his condition) which is rendered into "clearly implying." The second one is "طولك يا روح" [tawwilik ya rouh] (Lit. elongate you soul) which is used in Arabic to express the need to calm down. Translators opt for ideational equivalence as keeping the images is odd in English. It could be that translators deem the images unnecessary for the message. In other words, languages differ in the way they use imagery. What is acceptable in one language may not be so in another. Differences between the two texts also include the use of the title "السيد" [al-sayyid] (Mr.) which is transliterated into English. Furthermore, unlike the ST which uses this title alone to refer to the man, English inserts the proper name "Ahmed" after the title to achieve the same goal.

A similar choice (ideational equivalence) is made in the following part of conversation between Yasin and Maryam. Surprised at Maryam's aloofness and manner of evading his temptations, he enquires:

ST4: من أين لك بهذا اللسان؟ (ص 66)

ET4: min ayna laki bi hatha al-llisan? (p. 66)

TT4: “Where did you learn to talk like that?” (p.63)

Literal translation (Where have you got this tongue?) is odd. The image encoding the speaker's mode of expression in Arabic has no match in English. Thus, no imagery appears in the TT. Translators are satisfied with conveying the propositional content which expresses Yasin's amazement at his addressee's eloquence.

In the same conversation between Yasin and Maryam, the word “tongue” is used several times. The man's way of daringly inviting her for an immoral relationship may have triggered the following remark about him:

ST5: لسانك أطول من جسمك, (ص63)

ET5: lisanuka atwalu min jismika, (p. 63)

TT5: “Your words are more inflated than your body.” (p. 61)

Unlike the previous examples in which translators sacrifice imagery and provide ideational equivalence, this one includes a different strategy. New imagery replaces the one (Lit. Your tongue is longer than your body) used in the ST. For example, the phrase “Your words” is used instead of "السانك" [lisanuka] (your tongue). The comparative adjective "أطول" [atwalu] "longer" becomes “more inflated” which suggests pride and pedantry whereas its counterpart indicates inappropriate talk. Rather than sticking to the literal meaning of words in Arabic, translators use different imagery that gives a similar, but not the same meaning.

More examples illustrate the strategies used for translating Mahfouz's metaphors. Maryam reiterates the same image in the following series of imperative verbs:

ST6: تكلم. أطلق الحرية للسانك الطويل, ارفع صوتك, ... (ص 64)

ET6: takallam. atliqi al-hurriyyata li lisanika al-taweel, irfa' sawtak, (p. 64)

TT6: “Speak. Give free rein to your hot air. Raise your voice.” (p.62)

Certain elements are kept while others are sacrificed. Literally, Maryam says, "Speak. Set your long tongue free. Raise your voice" The word “tongue” is dispensed with. The idea of “freedom” is kept. It is expressed in terms of unleashing one's feelings. Instead of mentioning "tongue," translators replace it with one of its functions, expressing emotions.

Another example illustrates translators' strategies of keeping certain aspects of metaphorical expressions. Yasin goes to ask for Maryam's hand in marriage. So, he meets her mother. Yasin is attracted by the mother's nice talk. He says,

ST7: أشكرك من صميم قلبي, جزى الله عني لسانك الحلو, (ص127)

ET7: ashkuruki min sameemi qalbi, jaza Allahu 'ani lisanaki al-hulwi, (p. 127)

TT7: “I thank you from the bottom of my heart. May God reward the sweetness of your words.” (p.122)

Literally, Yasin says, "I thank you from the deep of my heart. May Allah reward, on my behalf, your sweet tongue." The phrase "السانك الحلو" [lisanaki al-hulwi] “your sweet tongue” is rendered into “the sweetness of your words.” In other words part of the metaphor which is “sweetness” is kept, while the other part which is “tongue” is replaced by

“words.” Other differences include deleting "عني" [‘anni] “on my behalf.” Translators may have considered it as unnecessary.

More translation issues arise regarding translating metaphors. The following remark is about Khadija's response to the news about Maryam's marriage to Yasin:

ST8: و مع أن مريم ظلت سنوات لا تخطر لها على بال فإن أنباء زواجها من ياسين أطلقت لسانها بالملاحظات المرة. (ص175)

ET8: wa ma' anna Maryama dhallat sanawatin la takhturu laha 'ala balin fa inna anba'a zawajiha min Yasin attaqat lisanaha bi al-mulahadhathi al-murrati. (p.175)

TT8: Although she had not thought of her former friend for years, news of her marriage to Yasin had inspired a flood of bitter comments. (p. 170)

In Arabic, Khadija expresses her attitude in terms of setting her tongue free, uttering “bitter comments.” Translators' choice shows a different image. In English, Khadija's disappointment at the news of her brother's marriage “inspired” in her “a flood of bitter comments.” The proper name “Maryam” is mentioned in Arabic, while the phrase “her former friend” is used in English. Both ST and TT express feelings of anger and denial, but in different ways.

The possibility of keeping the image in English appears in the following example. Zanuba tells al-Sayyid Ahmed that she is aware of his maneuvers to have a relationship with her. She saw him following her on her way to the goldsmith's. She expresses her resentment towards his pretending to be surprised at her presence there. She says,

ST9: و لما تظاهرت بالدهشة لرؤيتي كدت أطلق لساني فيك بما قسم و لكن الموقف أملى علي الأدب. (ص 107-108)

ET9: wa lamma tadhaharta bi al-dahshati li ru'yati kidtu utliqu lisani feeka bi ma qasam wa lakinna al-mawqifu amla 'alayya al-adaba. (pp. 108-109)

TT9: When you pretended to be astonished to see me, I almost let you have it with my tongue, but the circumstances forced me to be polite. (p. 103)

Here, the message is expressed in English using the word “tongue”. However, other elements used in Arabic like the verb "أطلق" [utliqu] “set free” and the expression "بما قسم" [bi ma qasam] “with what it is destined” are replaced by “let you have it with.” This example illustrates translators' manipulations of target language elements to give satisfactory renderings.

Translators can vary their strategies according to context. They can change metaphor into simile and provide an introductory sentence or remark to guide readers to meaning. When Yasin asks Ibrahim about the way he manages the quarrels between his wife and his mother, he says in a manner conveying lack of interest:

ST10: أذنا من طين و أذنا من عجين. (ص 37)

ET10: othnan min teen wa othnan min 'ajeen, (p. 37)

TT10: I act as though one of my ears was made of clay and the other of dough. (p.35)

The metaphor in Arabic expresses the man's lack of interest in taking action regarding his family quarrels. Literally, he says, "An ear is made of clay and an ear is made of dough." The expression suggests that the man would even pretend that he cannot hear them. Some clues can help TT readers understand the image in English. First, the metaphor is

changed into a simile by adding "as though" preceded by the sentence "ثم قال في عدم اكتراث" [thumma qala fi 'adami iktirath] (Then he responded with apparent disinterest). In addition, translators add "I act" before the simile to make it closer to English readers' minds. This method reflects translators' efforts to acquaint English readers with one of the ways speakers of Arabic figuratively express disinterestedness.

Contextual factors could be also behind keeping the metaphor in English without changing the image or adding any explanations. In an attempt to trigger more talk about Khadija, Yasin points to her poor social connections with other women in her neighborhood. He says,

ST11: ربما لها مزايا- كما يشهد بذلك زوجها- ولكن الناس عامة يستهويها الوجه الصبيح و اللسان الحلو.
(ص43)

ET11: rubbama laha mazaya- kama yashhadu bi thalika zawjuha- wa lakinna al-nnasa 'ammatan yastahweeha al-wajhu al-ssabeehu wa al-lisanu al-hilwu. (p. 43)

TT11: "Perhaps she does have good qualities, as her husband has testified, but in general people are attracted by a pretty face and a sweet tongue." (p.40)

Translators opt for formal equivalence as context makes the image clear. A person who has "لسان حلو" [lisanun hilwun] (a sweet tongue) is sociable and easily gets along with others.

Sometimes different languages express the same idea using different metaphors. When communication fails between two sides, the following metaphor used by Zanuba expresses this failure:

ST12: لا أفهم مما تعني شيئاً، الظاهر أنك في وادٍ و اني في وادٍ، (ص 105)

ET12: la afhamu mimma ta'ni shai'an, al-dhahiru innaka fi wadi wa ana fi wadi, (p. 105)

TT12: "I absolutely do not understand what you mean. It's clear that we're mountains apart." (p. 101)

The speaker pretends not to understand what her addressee (al-Sayyid Ahmad) means when he tells her that she is not an easy woman and that she is like a puzzle. Thus, lack of mutual understanding makes them like people in different places with large distances separating them without any means of communication. Although the two speakers are physically in the same place, Zanuba says, "أنك في وادٍ و اني في وادٍ" [innaka fi wadi wa ana fi wadi] (Lit. you are in a valley, and I am in a valley). The TT uses "we are mountains apart." Both languages use geographical features. However, each one chooses a certain spot. Arabic includes valley images, while English highlights mountain imagery. The result is conveying the function of the metaphor adequately.

More translation issues figure when dealing with metaphorical expressions. Culture poses a challenge in the following example. Kamal expresses his frustrations and disappointments as follows:

ST13: و كان الموت قبلي. (ص 378)

ET13: wa kana al-mawtu qiblata. (P. 378)

TT13: Once I directed my attention toward death. (p. 366)

The expression above appears in one of Kamal's meditations after losing Aida, his beloved. The speaker here uses a religious image to convey his dark thoughts and lack of interest in life. "القبلة" [Alqiblah] is the direction which Muslims must take when praying. More precisely it is Mecca where al-Ka'ba is located. It normally represents hope and a sense of fulfillment. Muslims go on pilgrimage to Mecca. It is a religious journey of hope and gratitude aimed at a better

relationship with God as well as people. Kamal replaces this place with death. Without Aida or any hope to marry her, Kamal finds life unworthy of living. Thus, death becomes the destination he seeks. The metaphor conveys the speaker's utter despair and alienation. In other words, the metaphor emphasizes Kamal's suspicions about religion. The English rendering has no cultural associations. It just conveys the character's despair. TT readers are not given any glimpses about the depth and enormity of the character's suffering and shaken religious faith. Translators' option illustrates their tendency to naturalize certain aspects of the ST. According to Andre Lefevere (2000), "translations will nearly always contain attempts to "naturalize" the different culture, to make it conform more to what the reader of the translation is used to" (pp. 236-237). To give TT readers an idea about the cultural import of the metaphor, the researchers suggest the following rendering:

Death was My Qiblah

This rendering retains the cultural feel of the text in Arabic. Readers in English are required to discern what the word refers to. The significance of conveying cultural aspects is articulated by Richard Van Leeuwen (2004) who states that "Cultural relations are essential for the translator and for comprehending the difficulties of his or her task" (p. 25). The religious ramifications of the expression illustrate the inseparable nexus between language and culture. In her discussion of the "problems of non-equivalence" in translation, Mona Baker (1992) illustrates the difficulty involved in translating "culture-specific concepts" (p. 21). In this respect, Baker (1992) explains that "The Source-language word may express a concept which is totally unknown in the target culture. The concept in question may be abstract or concrete; it may relate to a religious belief, a social custom, or even a type of food" (p.21). Here, translators face the challenge of making these concepts accessible to their TT readers.

The examples above illustrate the problems involved in translating metaphors from Arabic into English. Various differences appear between the two languages. Some gains and losses made in the translation process are highlighted. Different types of equivalence are attained to convey messages to TT readers.

CONCLUSIONS

Metaphors give rise to several translation issues. Due to differences between languages in using images to convey meaning, translation reflects different types of equivalence. Ideational equivalence gives the meaning without using any images. Functional equivalence appears when English has a metaphor that expresses the idea in the ST using a different image. Formal equivalence is sometimes opted for when contextual factors make the message clear. A fourth method is changing the metaphor into a simile. Thus, the image is kept in English and made more accessible. A fifth method is keeping some elements of the metaphor and changing others depending on translators' judgment. As for metaphors based on cultural concepts, the researchers emphasize the importance of retaining their cultural significance. Such metaphors can be crucial for understanding elements of literary works like characters' development. Acquainting TT readers with ST culture hopefully helps in promoting understanding among people speaking different languages or belonging to distinct cultures. Despite the challenges involved in translating *Palace of Desire* from Arabic into English, the translation reflects translators' efforts to bring about an illuminating version of Naguib Mahfouz's world of rich personal, social, and human interactions.

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